

Maaïke Lauwaert &
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Facing Value

Radical
perspectives
from the arts

Valiz

1. Be unproductive

2. Hesitate and question

3. Share

4. Improvise

5. Invite and participate

6. Embrace the void

7. Play!

8. Support

9. Unite

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9.

UNITE



Concert under the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP) designed by Lina Bo Bardi in 1968

'No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.'¹

This reflection by the British poet John Donne is echoed in various publications that consider the state of the current neoliberal society. The calculating individual living only for personal gain—*homo economicus*—is portrayed here as a danger to our sense of community and solidarity and thus to society. Governments that count on this calculating mentality and are themselves examples of it, reap what they sow: selfishness and discontent. It is no coincidence that Tony Judd, in *Ill Fares the Land*, his quest for a political system that would again foreground the common good, added the subtitle *A Treatise on Our Present Discontents*. According to Judd, the materialism and selfishness that are attendant on economistic thinking² are not inherent in the human condition.³ He feels that there has been a time when we organized our lives differently, more in line with the ideal of communality. The very last sentence in *Facing value* about creating value is about believing in this ideal and how to approach it. The 'continent' notion in the John Donne quote also touches upon this: to be aware of and be part of a larger whole can contribute to one's feeling of connection to that continent and thus become conducive to a sense of responsibility for advancing the common good.⁴

pp. 33-37

Not unlike John Donne's continent notion is the archipelago-thinking of Édouard Glissant:

The American Archipelagoes are extremely important, because it was in these islands that the idea of creolisation, that is, the

blend of cultures, was most brilliantly fulfilled. Continents reject mixings ... (whereas) archipelagic thought makes it possible to say that neither each person's identity nor the collective identity are fixed and established once and for all. I can change through exchange with the other, without losing or diluting my sense of self. And it is archipelagic thought that teaches us this.⁵

Glissant points to the tendency of 'the continent' to impose its worldview on others, which leads to globalization and homogenization. He therefore prefers to speak of mondialité (globality), by which he means a manner of exchange that acknowledges diversity. His thinking is more about variation than about the larger whole. In the difference between continent and archipelago the essence of thinking lies in living together: forming a changeable unity in spite of and mostly thanks to variety.

Diversity \leftrightarrow Variation

look up!

The artist Christian Nyampeta is working on a long-term project called *How To Live Together* in which he imagines a way of living together that leaves room for change and growth, while remaining engaged and related. Referencing Roland Barthes' 1977 lecture and book *Comment vivre ensemble* (How to live together), Nyampeta is especially interested in the rhythms of lives, societies and cultures that either clash or overlap. Barthes introduced the concept of 'idiorrhymy' to shape a theory in which we live together and recognize and respect the individual rhythms of the other.⁶ Nyampeta

pp. 434-435

studies different communities and their rhythms, believing that learning more about how these communities organize and structure their lives around a communal rhythm, is useful to us. Not only useful but quite essential to being able to live together.

It may seem that our societies are lacking collective work rhythms these days, with our flexible working hours, working from home, the Internet, et cetera. It was referred to before, how private time and company time are completely mixed up. By contrast Nyampeta, interestingly, stresses that collective rhythms and patterns are not so much lacking but have become invisible. They have gone underground, so to speak. So one of the tasks we face today, he stresses, is to understand them, to develop sensory organs for them, to analyse them and to submit them to a literacy of form. According to Nyampeta, we could say that rhythms are always there, whenever energy is spent.

We can say for example, speculatively, that in the Netherlands our separate lives are more in synch with each other than it may appear. Especially given that nowadays it is possible to synch time very very very accurately. So when the alarm clock goes off at a specific time in the morning, perhaps this applies to a greater number of people in any given locality in the country.⁷

Nyampeta continues:

If this shift in timing is truly the case, it would mean that the activities and gestures of waking up, toiletry, breakfast and so

on are very much alike across countless households at the exact same moment. The instant we wake up and perform our seemingly private gestures in our flexible times, we may be led to believe that such activities are personal, unique, individual, and so on, while we nonetheless are engaged in a mass choreography of immense value. Indeed, the consumption of electricity, gas, water and so on corresponds neatly to such personal gestures.

Personal
↓ continuum
Political

However, synchronicity is not synonymous with harmony, Nyampeta points out.

Someone who knew this very well was the Dutch architect Frank van Klinger (1919-1999). He truly believed in the principles of nuisance and 'unclotting' (or in common words: inconvenience and integration). He built some of the most radical buildings of the Netherlands in the sixties and seventies. It all started in 1965 in the pioneering city of Dronten with the community centre De Meerpaal, comparable to Cedric Price's famous, albeit never realized, *Fun Palace*.⁸

pp. 419-425

At the intersection of four neighbourhoods, Van Klinger realized an *agora*: a square with a roof. The square was not empty but contained all kinds of functions: a theatre with an open roof, a bar, a public space with seats and a large cinema screen, a volleyball court, a bowling alley, an exhibition space, and a restaurant. The remaining space would be used, for example, for a market or an occasional bicycle race. In fact, anything was possible and there was always something going on. The combination of volleyball and Hamlet was less successful, as soon became

pp. 418, 431

pp. 432 (t),
433 (t)

apparent, and yet that was exactly what Van Klinger argued for. The 'nuisance' meant that people had to make contact to discuss how to facilitate each other's wishes.

This could result in either friendship or hostility, or any of the variations between the two. So agreements had to be reached, taking into account each other's wishes on the basis of knowing the other. There was the risk of massive failure, but according to Van Klinger it could work, and each time it provided an opportunity for gaining understanding, respect and friendship.⁹ And that would help the 'unclotting' of society, which was Van Klinger's true agenda. He felt that people were clotting too much in groups and spaces, leading to not enough interest in the other and little social cohesion. Unclotting would restore the contact between people. He therefore designed his buildings as meeting places where social integration was promoted without cancelling out the differences between people. 'Accommodating a well-functioning social device', he called it.¹⁰

Heterotopia

contact, but hostile or friendly?

who determines what kind of interaction should be had, &

who defines the interactions taking place?

who is on the ground?

Eight years later, in 1973, the community centre Karregat would open in the city of Eindhoven. It was in all respects a social experiment, in which Van Klinger could express all his ideals about the open society, supported by the spirit of experimentation that pervaded the local administration at the time. The Karregat was to be the living room for the new neighbourhood of Herzenbroeken, a small-scale, varied neighbourhood, a test site for living-and-working environments that were very much under the control of the residents. The

pp. 416-417

Karregat had schools, a doctor's office, a library, a gym, a supermarket and a café, all situated around the core of the community centre—called De Kuil (The Hollow)—in open connection with each other. Organizations, schools and businesses made use of each other's facilities. Van Klingerén's technical and conceptual design allowed the building to 'move with the times' and the residents could experience real ownership. Although the building was renovated extensively several times, its open character eventually could not withstand the changes in society: the ideal of communality made way for the belief in individualism. The open spaces were subdivided into 'clots' and all 'nuisance' went out in favour of everyone's individual space.

'Normalization makes everything safe again', someone says in the film *Beauty and the Right to the Ugly* (2014) that Wendelien van Oldenborgh made about the Karregat.¹¹ She filmed the building shortly before the third major renovation, portraying the buildings transformations as manifestations of the social changes of the past forty years: from open to closed, from friction to smoothness, from variety to uniformity. According to Van Oldenborgh, the alternative, idealistic spirit of Van Klingerén and the city administration has now been incorporated into the neoliberal system. This system pretends to be open and to welcome personal initiative, but in reality this is all just show. Things may look the same, but the radical ideas behind Van Klingerén's design are gone.¹² It is no longer about making use of differences to bring people into contact but about uniforming and controlling these differences. Or, in the words of Nyampeta: 'To

harmonize differences of the members is far more difficult than to uniformize all the members.'¹³ This does not create recognition, but alienation. Not solidarity, but clotting. Not dialogue, but empty words.

Dialogue is the perfect form to express a common interest without having to reach a shared opinion. It is an exchange with the other, born from curiosity and attention for the other's ideas, feelings and thoughts. The fact that one can never fully gauge or understand the other does not have to stand in the way of working and living together. After all, we want to accomplish something together. That is also the conclusion reached by Richard Sennett in his study of forms of cooperation and he sees this confirmed by the ideas of the 16th-century philosopher Michel de Montaigne.¹⁴ Working together and living together require skills such as being able to listen, showing an interest and, especially, developing empathy: 'Looking outward makes for a better social bond than imagining others are reflected in ourselves, or as though society itself was constructed as a room of mirrors. But looking outward is a skill people have to learn.'¹⁵ This skill has tremendous value and holds the key to solving many problems related to misunderstanding, hostility and fear.

Be conscious of the islands and archipelagos, the continents and their drifts, look outward, be curious, try to listen carefully and really see the other in front of you. Do this in the knowledge that every morning we are all united in a mass choreography of immense value.

- 1 Quoted for example in Hans Achterhuis. *De utopie van de vrije markt* (Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 2012). The complete meditation XVII deals with death and dying: 'No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.'
- 2 See in this context also the book *De mythe van het economisme* by Jesse Klaver (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2015).
- 3 Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land: A Treatise on Our Present Discontents* (New York, Penguin Press, 2010), p. 2.
- 4 In the 2015 BAK reader *Future Publics (The Rest Can and Should Be Done by the People)*, authors and artists explore contemporary forms of social organization from which a temporary and provisional 'we' can occur. This involves such improvised but strategic forms of protest as Occupy, the Kurdish women's movement or the encampments of protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo. 'These future publics are provisional assemblies that question existing mechanisms of collective organization and constructions of social value and cultural meaning, recognizing that the institutions of public life cannot continue with a "business-as-usual" attitude as late capital's certitudes collapse and entrenched regimes are being challenged across the globe.'
- 5 Édouard Glissant and Hans Ulrich Obrist, No. 038 (*DOCUMENTA (13): 100 Notes—100 Thoughts*), Ostfildern: Hatje-Cantz, 2012.
- 6 Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
- 7 Maaïke Lauwaert, 'Interview with Christian Nyampeta', *Metropolis M* 2015, no. 6, pp. 22–23.
- 8 Cedric Price (1934–2003) was an influential and visionary architect of the late-twentieth century with a focus on flexible or adaptable projects that invited

- the user's participation. *Fun Palace* is his most celebrated work. It relied radically on structure and technology, was extremely time-based and anticipatory. With it he addressed social and political issues that go far beyond the typical bounds of architecture. The only fixed element of *Fun Palace* was a structural grid in which a wide range of other programmatic elements (hanging theatres, activity spaces, cinema screens and speakers) could be moved around, composed when needed, and quickly taken apart afterwards. Price once said about *Fun Palace* that 'it was well into the detailed design of the project, at an alcohol-inspired brain-storming session off Times Square in 1962, that we decided on the name Fun Palace for our short-life conglomerate of disparate, free-choice, free-time, voluntary activities, planned as a public launching-pad rather than a Mecca for East London'. 'Cedric Price Talks at the AA', *AA Files* 19 (Spring 1990), pp. 27–34, p. 32.
- 9 Marina van den Bergen and Piet Vollaard. 'The Biggest Living Room in the Netherlands: Frank van Klingeren's Karregat in Eindhoven, 1970–1973', *OASE* 57 (2001), pp. 62–73.
- 10 Marina van den Bergen and Piet Vollaard, *Hinder en ontkenning: Architectuur en maatschappij in het werk van Frank van Klingeren* (Rotterdam: O10 Publishers, 2003), p. 310.
- 11 Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Beauty and the Right to the Ugly*, film, 2014.
- 12 With the latest renovation, Van Klingeren's formal nonchalance, allowing for openness and meeting and avoiding strict boundaries, has been replaced with a formal carefulness that, albeit unintentionally, does impose such strict boundaries. See: Xander Vermeulen Windsant, 't Karregat, vernieuwd en verbeterd', 25 March 2016, www.archined.nl/2016/03/t-karregat-vernieuwd-en-verbeterd.
- 13 Lauwaert 2015, op. cit., p. 24.
- 14 Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).
- 15 Ibid., p. 278.

HOW TO BEHAVE BETTER.

1 REMEMBER THAT YOU

DON'T KNOW

2 LEARN TO CARE

3 SAY THANK YOU

4 WEAR YOUR HEART ON

YOUR SLEEVE

5 INSIST ON TALKING

FACE TO FACE

6 FOLLOW THE LIFE OF

AN IDEA

7 SPEAK FRANKLY

8 TAKE YOUR TIME

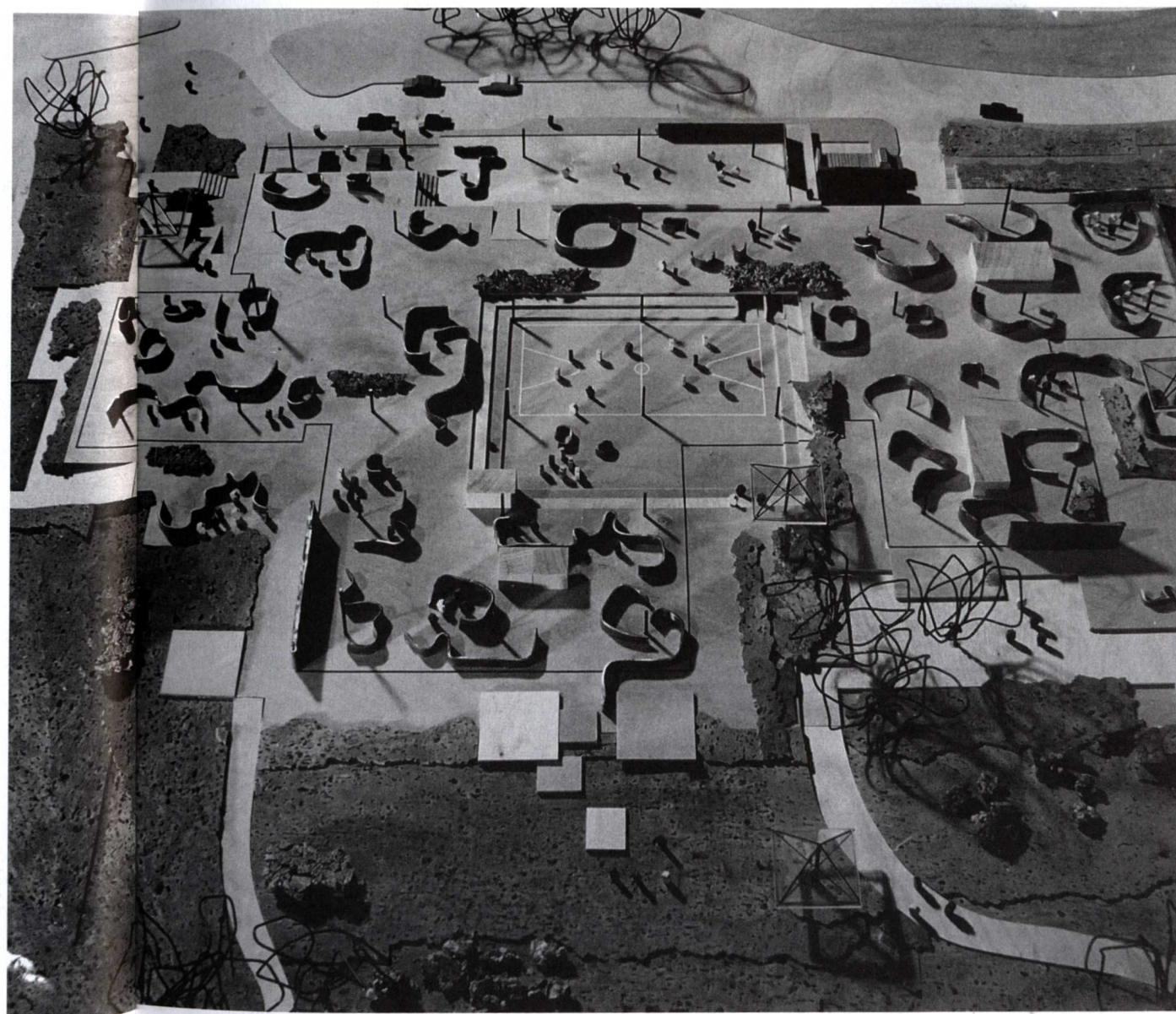
9 BE MALADJUSTED

10 TOAST

Anthony Huberman, excerpt from 'Take Care', Sternberg Press, 2011



Frank van Klinger, 't Karregat, Eindhoven 1970-1973



Frank van Klinger, design of 't Karregat, Eindhoven, 1971